Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying : consultation summary report

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INTRODUCTION

The intent to hold a roundtable to find ways for Albertans to prevent and respond to family violence was announced by Premier Klein in October 2003. The Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying began under the leadership of Mrs. Colleen Klein, Honorary Chair, and Hon. Iris Evans, Minister of Children's Services, Chair, in November 2003. The goal of the roundtable is to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations for action, based on broad consultation with Albertans. These recommendations will form the cornerstone of a strategy for the prevention of family violence and bullying and will build on existing community capacity to provide an appropriate provincial framework for effective solution-based action. Specifically, the objectives of the roundtable are to:

- Conduct an inclusive, province-wide consultation to identify solutions that can be used to build a co-ordinated, inclusive and collaborative response to family violence and bullying;
- Acknowledge and address the full spectrum of strategies, from primary prevention to forensic responses;
- Understand the need for, and value of a co-ordinated and collaborative response to family violence and bullying; and
- Provide an opportunity for meaningful dialogue and the development of a shared vision for the elimination of family violence and bullying.

The roundtable process was built with the input of government and community stakeholders on a foundation of work that has already been done in Alberta and other jurisdictions to address family violence and bullying. This work includes the Alberta Family Violence Review Project and the Task Force on Children at Risk.

Through a consultation process that included regional workshops, focus groups and a public questionnaire, Albertans told us what they think needs to be done to end family violence and bullying. This summary report reflects the many different voices we heard:

- Those who have been directly impacted by family violence and bullying;
- The front-line workers who respond to their needs;
- Community organizations that are working to prevent family violence and bullying; and
- Policy makers who enable this work.

You told us that family violence and bullying could no longer be tolerated in Alberta. The time to take action is now! If we all work together, we can make Alberta a province that is violence-free.

What We Did

The roundtable process was guided by the partnering ministers of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Children's Services, Community Development, Finance, Health and Wellness, Human Resources and Employment, International and Intergovernmental Affairs, Learning, Justice and the Attorney General, Seniors and the Solicitor General and a steering committee of government and community representatives who provided direction to a working group co-ordinated by Alberta Children's Services. The working group was responsible for implementing the consultation process and they traveled the province, listening to Albertans in regional workshops and focus groups.

Creating the Foundation

Listening to the Voices

A clear set of principles formed the common foundation for all aspects of the roundtable process. These principles are:

Fundamental Principles:

- Respect for the inherent worth, dignity and equality of all people is fundamental in addressing family violence and bullying.
- Freedom from violence and abuse is a human right that applies to individuals, families and communities.
- People must be empowered and supported to exert their basic right to personal safety.
- The social, psychological and fiscal consequences of family violence and bullying affect all Albertans, making these forms of violence a public concern and a primary responsibility of our society.

Principles for Action:

- Commitment to change in societal attitudes is critical for long-term solutions to family violence and bullying.
- Services to address family violence and bullying must be dedicated, first and foremost, to the protection and well-being of survivors, victims and children who have been exposed to these forms of violence.
- A collaborative and co-ordinated community response is essential to effectively address family violence and bullying.
- Services must be designed and delivered at a community level in ways that reflect, respect and acknowledge the diversity and uniqueness of communities.

These principles were focused on the needs and experiences of those impacted by family violence and bullying and on finding collective solutions to prevent and effectively respond to these very real issues in communities across Alberta.

Video Presentation

A video was developed to provide a consistent context for each regional workshop. In recognition of the roundtable principles, the video included messages from the Honorary Chair, Mrs. Colleen Klein, and Chair, Honourable Iris Evans, Minister of Children's Services. It also included best practice information from leading academics and service providers, community leaders and, most importantly, the voices, stories and experiences of those who had been directly impacted by family violence and bullying.

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Regional Workshop Guide & Workbook

The Regional Workshop Guide and Workbook was created to provide a common starting point for discussions about family violence and bullying. The content was drawn from peer-reviewed studies and government statistics to answer the questions:

- What is family violence/bullying?
- How common is family violence/bullying in Alberta?
- What is the impact of family violence/bullying on victims, abusers and society?
- Who is affected by family violence/bullying?
- What is being done today to address family violence and bullying?

The guide and workbook was not intended to be the definitive word on family violence and bullying. Rather, it gave workshop participants a ready source of information on which they could debate, agree and move toward solutions.

Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying Website

www.familyviolenceroundtable.gov.ab.ca

The roundtable website was created as a source of information for all Albertans. The website invited input through open e-mail and an on-line questionnaire. The Regional Workshop Guide and Workbook was available on the website, along with direct links to the references cited in that document, to provide access to a broad range of information about family violence and bullying. The website also provided direct links to existing programs and services that have a current mandate to prevent and/or respond to family violence and bullying, thereby ensuring that people with an imminent need for support can get the help they need.

Consultation Methods

Regional Workshops

Thirteen regional workshops were held between Feb. 17 and March 20 in communities across Alberta. A total of 1,090 individuals participated in the workshops representing health, mental health, schools, women's shelters, community and family services, police, justice, community agencies, Aboriginal communities and faith communities. The purpose of the workshops was to provide an opportunity for representatives from diverse groups to come together to discuss critical issues related to family violence and bullying and to propose possible solutions.

In the workshops, participants were asked to highlight key ideas from their small group discussions to present back to the larger group. In Calgary and Edmonton (given the large number of participants), "theme weavers" moved through the small group rooms to listen and capture the major themes of the discussion that were then reported back to all participants. These key ideas or themes were collated along with all of the flipchart notes from the small group discussions and are reflected in this summary report.

Location	Date	Number of Participants
Fort McMurray	Feb. 17	48
Peace River	Feb. 19	53
Bonnyville	Feb. 23	67
Grande Prairie	Feb. 25	66
Red Deer	Feb. 26	94
Medicine Hat	March 2	63
Vermilion	March 2	66
Lethbridge	March 4	84
High Level	March 9	32
Edson	March 11	66
Edmonton	March 16	268
Calgary	March 18	156
Banff	March 20	27
	Total Participants	1,090

Representatives from Aboriginal communities and organizations were invited to "self-select" into a separate group offered at each workshop, to allow for a more focused discussion on family violence and bullying in those communities. Over 120 individuals chose this option. In addition, six focus groups were conducted with Aboriginal people, including people in isolated and remote communities, to ensure the voices of people in those communities were heard. Results from these focus groups are reported with those of the Aboriginal self-select groups.

In some cases, communities or groups came together before the regional workshop to discuss their perspectives on family violence and/or bullying and to recommend solutions. Some of these groups put together detailed summaries of their discussions and brought these documents to the workshops. This provided an opportunity for many more voices to be heard and for specific points of view to be communicated.

Focus Groups

In addition to the regional workshops, focus groups were held with individuals and groups who represented specific topics or perspectives that were critical to the roundtable process. Focus groups with victims were audiotaped and the tapes transcribed and destroyed, to ensure confidentiality was assured while allowing these crucial voices to be heard.

Topic/Perspective	Number of Groups	Number of Participants
Aboriginal communities	10	208
Bullying	2	199
Elder abuse best practices	1	30
Faith community leaders	1	20
Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered	1	10
Immigrant women	2	58
Male victims	4	32
Military community	1	30
Older adult victims	2	15
Perpetrators	3	35
Persons with disabilities victims	2	20
Women exploited by prostitution	1	10
Women in emergency shelters	2	15
Women in second stage housing	1	24
Total	33	706

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Public Questionnaire

All Albertans were invited to add their voices to the roundtable process through a questionnaire that was available on-line at the roundtable website and widely distributed through public buildings. As well, newspaper advertising was purchased in daily and weekly newspapers in all communities, inviting Albertans to contribute their perspectives to the roundtable process. This summary document incorporates many of those views. Questionnaires will be accepted until June 1, 2004 at which time a summary will be prepared and included in the final report.

My Alberta Contest

The *My Alberta: Violence-Free Contest* was an opportunity for Alberta children and youth ages five to 17 share their thoughts on violence and bullying and their vision of a province where violence does not exist.

Submissions were asked for in the form of a piece of artwork or essay in response to the question: **What is Your Vision For a Violence-Free Alberta?** The intent is that entries will be displayed at the Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying in Calgary on May 7, 2004.

Consultation Framework

The Alberta Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying was initiated by the provincial government that, along with local governments, community service providers, youth, parents and all Alberta citizens, is ready to take action to end family violence and bullying. The recent tragic deaths from family violence and bullying in Alberta gave rise to a renewed commitment on the part of all Albertans to stop these tragedies and to build healthy families and communities.

Given this commitment to action, the roundtable process was focused on solutions. To achieve this purpose, a consultation framework was constructed by government and community stakeholders and then adapted to fit the different objectives of the regional workshops and focus groups (see Appendix A – Consultation Questions). Participants in the regional workshops and focus groups were asked to answer specific questions, representing four key areas for action: social change, services and supports, co-ordination and collaboration and accountability.

What We Heard

Through the regional workshops, focus groups and public questionnaire, we heard from hundreds of Albertans who told us what they think needs to be done to effectively respond to and eventually stop family violence and bullying in this province. The many comments and suggestions we heard have been summarized under six key themes:

1) social change;
2) provincial leadership;
3) coordinated, collaborative community response;
4) services and supports;
5) accountability; and
6) Aboriginal communities.

The following is a summary of the wealth of ideas that people shared, debated and discussed in the roundtable process. All the information collected throughout the process has been captured, sorted and retained to assist in the post-roundtable implementation planning. Common themes have been grouped in sections including General Comments, and Family Violence and Bullying.

Key Theme 1: Social Change

Societal beliefs and attitudes affect our understanding of, and responses to, a broad range of family violence and bullying issues. Mass media, cultural beliefs, gender role stereotypes and religious traditions all contribute to behaviours and attitudes that influence family violence and bullying and how we react to it. However, societal beliefs and attitudes will only be changed when the entire community begins to accept its responsibility and ability to have an impact on family violence and bullying.

Solutions:

1. Changing Public Awareness, Knowledge and Attitudes

Many of the groups we talked to said Albertans need to recognize and celebrate the diversity and positive contributions of the people in their communities. When we learn to accept, respect and support all people, we will be on the road to eliminating the root causes, and reducing the incidence of, family violence and bullying. This will require public education to break down pervasive stereotypes in society and build knowledge and understanding about the contributions of often marginalized groups in society, including those with low socio-economic status, youth, immigrants, visible minorities, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, people who are gay, lesbian and transgendered, faith communities and other groups who are seen as "different."

Participants told us that there is a need for a long-term and multi-layered social marketing campaign that is designed to raise awareness, increase knowledge and motivate individual and collective action on family violence and bullying. People said we need to define a vision of a violence-free Alberta and create a social environment where everyone plays a role in ending family violence and bullying. We need to be more consistent in what we say we value and in what we are prepared to do about it.

We need to listen to and actively involve a full scope of community people and diverse perspectives, particularly our young people, in the design, development and delivery of such a campaign if we hope to effect real social change. Above all, we need to stop tolerating all forms of violence and become a more caring society.

The programs and services we design must be culturally competent and sensitive to the differences of specific populations, while teaching that the law applies equally to everyone. We must recognize that cultural norms can cause severe isolation for victims of family violence and bullying. In some cases, those who report violence are shunned or ostracized from their cultural communities. Individuals and families need to know that the broader community will support them when they are attempting to make positive changes in their lives.

> ***"The fight next door is part of our problem—not just their problem."***
>
> **- Participant, regional workshop**

General Comments

- Social change takes time. Be prepared to commit to a multi-faceted, long-term public campaign (e.g. 20 years).
- Work together to ensure messages are consistent.
- Communicate that violence of any type is not acceptable. Challenge the norms about what is acceptable behavior in all realms of life (e.g. business, sports, school).
- Clarify the definitions and scope of family violence and bullying.
- Educate people on how to recognize the signs and respond appropriately to family violence and bullying.
- Increase public awareness about the signs of older adult abuse and the options they have available to them.
- Demonstrate that family violence and bullying can affect anyone, regardless of who they are, how much money they have or where they live.
- Communicate that family violence and bullying are social issues, not gender issues.
- Communicate that it is a basic and fundamental human right to be free of family violence and bullying, including child exposure to family violence.
- Show the social and economic costs of family violence and bullying to society.
- Encourage individual responsibility and accountability with the message, "everyone needs to be part of the solution."
- Give people permission and practical strategies to respond to family violence and bullying.
- Use graphic, hard-hitting messages that "shatter the silence" and show family violence and bullying for what they are: ugly, insidious and harmful to individuals, families and society.
- Messages should focus on healthy relationships and healthy families, rather than just on family violence and bullying.
- Promote positive messages of hope and resiliency.
- Identify and promote healthy same sex relationships for other same sex couples.
- Use the "power of the pulpit" to deliver effective messages about healthy relationships and preventing family violence and bullying.
- Recognize that, to effect real change, political, religious, corporate, mass media and community leaders must lead by example, role modeling healthy relationships for the people who look to them for guidance and direction.
- Promote a stronger "sense of community" in military communities.
- Stop blaming parents and promote pro-active positive messages that encourage parents to get involved and spend time with their children.
- Involve and engage youth in the planning process to ensure messages are relevant and meaningful.

- Messages to youth need to deal with the real issues like suicide, bullying, and family violence, and focus on making this growing problem socially unacceptable. Most importantly, they need to empower youth, encourage advocacy for themselves and others and focus on prevention.
- Deliver messages to youth through media that are most effective at reaching young people (e.g. schools, curriculum, bus stops, restrooms, movie theatres, sports facilities, etc.).

(Note: the following input was frequent and often contradictory)

- Shift the thinking on family violence and bullying to a position of "zero tolerance."
- Do not use the terminology "zero tolerance" because it can be interpreted too many ways and may stop people from getting the help they need (e.g. children who bully).

Family Violence

- Create messages that de-stigmatize the issue for offenders and victims so that they are more likely to seek help.
- Communicate that both women and men can be victims of family violence.
- Communicate that elder abuse is on the rise.
- Break the silence and stigma attached to sexual violence in intimate partner relationships by talking about it.
- Communicate the seriousness of children being exposed to family violence and the fact that it often has long-term implications to their well-being.

> ***"We need to give average Albertans a 'tool kit' to use as a concerned citizen."***
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Bullying

- Develop a way for Albertans to share stories of how they are dealing effectively with bullying in their schools, communities, work and lives (e.g. television commercials, books, newsletters, etc.).
- Create strong mentoring messages to encourage support through caring and supportive relationships (e.g. youth to adult, youth to youth, adult to adult).
- Explore ways to use popular culture and icons (e.g. music videos, collaborative songs, sports and music stars, etc.) to reach children and youth with effective anti-bullying messages.
- Implement a comprehensive strategy/campaign to provide mentors and positive role models in schools and communities.
- Use youth role models to convey messages of "empathy and caring" for those who need support or are "different."

2. Focus on Prevention/Education

We need to build a culture of respect in Alberta and that starts with education. However, education was not viewed as just the responsibility of schools. Many participants said that, to be effective, prevention and education must start early and continue through life. Most people believe that the education system, in real partnership with parents and the community, has a significant role to play in helping to develop a value system that makes family violence and bullying intolerable in our society. Citizen involvement and engagement in planning, developing and delivering supports in their schools and communities is key to achieving meaningful outcomes.

General

- Include the fourth "R" – relationships – in the curriculum at all grade levels.
- Support students to design and deliver workshops on family violence and bullying in schools through peer support programs.

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General

- Include the fourth "R" – relationships – in the curriculum at all grade levels.
- Support students to design and deliver workshops on family violence and bullying in schools through peer support programs.

- Provide children with the knowledge and strategies they need to deal with family violence and bullying.
- Develop a "virtues" program that teaches kindness and good manners to all school-aged children.
- Provide faith-based programs to children and parents to develop positive values and relationship behaviours.
- Ensure Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Education that involves elders and community people is available in schools, communities and workplaces.
- Teach non-violence in sports and set appropriate consequences for violent behavior.
- Endorse training for coaches and parents that support positive interaction and do not condone violence.
- Provide information on Canadian values and customs (with respect to family violence and bullying) to those who apply for immigrant status.
- Establish a speaker's bureau of gay, lesbian and transgendered people to build understanding of the issues within communities and with service providers.

"What is culturally acceptable at home may not be in Canadian society."

– Focus group participant – Immigrant women

Family Violence

- Provide education on family violence in workplaces to "take the information to where people are."
- Encourage workplaces to help build healthy families through appropriate policies that recognize the importance of families/family time.
- Provide community awareness and specific volunteer training events and resources targeted to community groups, faith leaders and service organizations that educate about the prevention of family violence and community-based options for an appropriate response that assures the safety and protection of all those involved.
- Provide training on the importance of early childhood development for all community-based service providers who provide prevention programs with youth and parents (i.e. Schools, Family and Community Support Services, Child and Family Service Authorities, Regional Health Authorities, funded agencies, faith community, sports associations, volunteer programs).

Bullying

- Strengthen and build upon Alberta Learning curriculum to teach children how to effectively deal with bullying and violence in their schools and to send the message that violence and bullying are not acceptable.
- Deliver proven bullying prevention programs in schools (e.g. Bully Busters, Peace Patrol, Safe and Caring Schools).
- Teach children effective strategies to use when they are being bullied or are witnessing bullying.
- Ensure parents, youth and children are aware of the full scope of bullying within school, home, community and "Cyber space" environments and are provided with strategies to report and/or intervene.
- Give schools more ability to deal with children who bully others.

"Youth and children should be discouraged from 'keeping secrets,' 'sucking it up' or 'dealing with it' on their own."

– Youth focus group participant

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3. Priority on Early Intervention

Strong families and strong communities are key to the solutions that will have a positive long-term impact on family violence and bullying. Our greatest hope for changing transgenerational violence lies with our children. We need to recognize the value of families and provide meaningful supports.

General

- Make positive parenting information readily available in communities and support parent driven opportunities for parent-to-parent support and positive parent/child interaction.
- Provide parenting courses that help parents become positive teachers and role models for their children.
- Teach social skills and life skills to young people throughout the whole school curriculum.
- Address family violence in marriage counselling and marriage preparation courses.
- Engage healthy families as mentors, in partnership with the professionals involved with families, to build positive relationships and support families in crisis.
- Provide incentives for engaging in parenting education and/or to allow one parent to stay home and raise the children.
- Establish a family support line (e.g. "Family Link") that provides positive, proactive support to families, rather than crisis intervention.
- Increase access to affordable recreation and leisure activities for families.
- Establish and/or support family resource centres across Alberta.
- Enhance early childhood development programs and services for young children (e.g. Head Start, Success by 6, Parent Resource Centres).
- Develop/support mentoring and "buddying" programs, such as Big Sisters, Big Brothers and the Boys and Girls Clubs, to provide positive role models for children.
- Increase access to after school programs.
- Establish youth councils and youth centres in every community.
- Provide respite care to families and caregivers in high stress circumstances.
- Provide faith-based parenting workshops and support through, and to, faith communities.
- Provide drop-in daycare as proactive respite for primary lone parent caregivers (i.e. single parents/military).

4. Mentoring, Modeling and Community Leadership

If family violence and bullying are everybody's business, everybody should be encouraged to get involved. The strategies we use at the local, regional and provincial level must be designed to engage individuals, organizations, businesses, corporations and governments in finding solutions to family violence and bullying and taking the necessary action to effect positive change.

Mentoring support systems are necessary to help improve the lives of Albertans and enable them to become confident and responsible community members. By laying this foundation and creating strong mentoring relationships at an early age between youth and positive adult role models, young Albertans will be empowered and provided with the tools to help them make positive choices, overcome negative barriers and break the cycle of violence and other destructive behaviors.

General

- Develop mentorships through partnerships with community organizations and stakeholders and other interested community-minded groups and agencies.

- Consider youth-to-youth mentorships, in-school mentoring and paired mentorship options to help maximize time and resources and make mentoring as widely accessible as possible.
- Train mentors on how to prevent and respond to violence and abuse and to direct youth to other means of support, if necessary.
- Parent-to-parent and family-to-family mentoring could play a strong support role in communities.
- Enlist community leaders as champions who can and will speak out on family violence and bullying.
- Engage corporate leaders to speak with others in their sector.
- Develop a comprehensive mentoring strategy that identifies and engages a diverse range of community, provincial and federal leaders who can act as positive role models and promote the message that family violence and bullying are not acceptable.
- Encourage workplaces to develop family wellness programs that provide employees with time off to deal with family violence and bullying issues.
- Support communities to develop local initiatives that respond to family violence and bullying.
- Offer tax incentives to promote local and provincial involvement in community by the business sector.
- Develop local government declarations for "violence-free" zones, Family Violence Prevention Month, etc.
- Develop and implement incentives for communities who address family violence and bullying in ways that meet the needs of their communities (similar to provincial awards such as "Communities in Bloom," "Peace Awards," "Building Safer Communities," etc.).
- People who are leading healthy, productive lives after family violence and bullying can be mentors for those looking for strength and inspiration (this includes both victims and perpetrators).

"It's about how we define ourselves as a province. The real Alberta Advantage is safe, healthy families. We need to become a community of caring."

- Participant, regional workshop

Family Violence

- Avoid making family violence strictly a gender issue. Involve men and women equally in finding solutions.
- Dispel the myth that family violence is a family matter.
- Engage men and boys in the entire issue; reduce the stigma of offering and asking for help.
- Create a tool for businesses and corporations that they can use to determine the costs of family violence to their organizations.

Bullying

- Support and expand the Block Parent program to have a "safe house" on every block.
- Develop and implement a process to raise awareness and deal with bullying in the workplace (e.g., Provincial "HELP" line, safe employee assistance programs, etc.).
- Make bullying more than just a school issue. Engage the whole community and its leaders in addressing the causes and consequences.

"We can't throw our hands up in despair. That lets us off the hook—both collectively and individually."

- Participant, regional workshop

5. Social Investment

Every regional workshop spoke to social investments in housing, adequate income support, daycare and justice reform as critical elements of the solution. Participants noted that the impact of factors such as poverty, addictions, transportation barriers, low education levels and legal obstacles are underestimated in preventing and responding to family violence and bullying. Adequate social supports, including financial support for basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, were identified by victims of family violence as key to making the transition – safely and successfully – from an unsafe situation to a healthy and safe future.

> ***"There must be recognition that family violence is morally wrong and illegal. We need to build a new value system."***
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> **- Focus group participant**

General

- Build on best practices and support research to understand the root causes of family violence and bullying. Use this information to take action on these root causes such as poverty and the long-term impacts of low education and low income on successful outcomes for families.
- Find better ways to show that investing in basic supports for families is the ultimate prevention and will outperform fiscal targets and outcome measures possible through crisis services and supports.
- Consider increasing access to Income Support (IS) (formerly Supports for Independence) and provide rates that are reasonable and adequate to help people escape from abusive situations and maintain basic food, clothing and shelter needs for families victimized by family violence that are realistic to the community they live in.
- Trust the current research that clearly points to the value, in both social and economic terms, of early childhood development in the reduction of long-term social costs and preventing compromised brain development.
- Increase access to quality, affordable childcare, particularly to support families in transition from a violence relationship (i.e. training/education, treatment and follow-up programs, low income, high stress environments).
- Increase the supply and access to second stage and affordable housing in Alberta's communities.
- Ensure a telephone is available in every home.

Key Theme 2: Provincial Leadership

Family violence and bullying will only be stopped if each one of us accepts our ability and responsibility to take meaningful action, when and where it's needed. Participants strongly emphasized the importance of individual, family and community-level action. However, they also emphasized that the provincial government has a clear leadership role to play in enabling multi-level action. This role includes providing a more co-ordinated approach at the provincial level, reinforcing and supporting collaboration at the community level, providing the necessary legislative support, reviewing how it funds programs to make the best use of available resources, and looking for long-term sustainable solutions.

Governments need to think and work outside of the current structural silos and pre-determined delivery models if they hope to change and make better use of resources. In general, participants said that funding decisions based on the ability of service providers to achieve positive outcomes through a wholistic community approach that includes a continuum of services and supports (i.e. systems approach) would result in a more effective response. A provincial response must also reflect and give meaning to Aboriginal people.

- Consider youth-to-youth mentorships, in-school mentoring and paired mentorship options to help maximize time and resources and make mentoring as widely accessible as possible.
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The most consistent theme was the need to shift from current funding models to long-term, sustainable funding models that are based on solid outcomes (i.e. determinants of health). These long-term models will allow communities to build on existing programs and services and be more accountable overall to the communities, families and individuals they serve.

Solutions:

1. Single, Cross-Sectoral Agency

Provincial co-ordination and collaboration must be supported through a system that is built on clear and common goals and jointly articulated expectations. The goals and expectations must be defined in terms of achieving positive outcomes for those impacted by violence, through legislation and policy, cross-sectoral services and multi-disciplinary teams in the community. One approach to achieving provincial co-ordination and collaboration is to establish a central planning body that is responsible for overseeing the overall effectiveness of the prevention of, and response to, family violence and bullying. Although views on structure varied, the concept of formal provincial co-ordination emerged in virtually every regional workshop.

General

- Establish a provincial agency (some said similar to AADAC, others said a Premier's Council) that is responsible for family violence and bullying.
- Strengthen the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and establish it as a Centre of Excellence.
- Establish a Ministry/Department of Children that incorporates children's services, education, youth justice, etc.
- Establish a single provincial planning body that has strong leadership, responsibility for a budget and allocation of resources and legislative/policy direction that is representative of a cross-sector approach with government and community.
- Develop a single governing body/committee that has leadership profile, policy influence, a clear mandate to prevent and reduce the incidence of family violence and bullying in Alberta and the resources to sustain it over time.

2. Enhanced Cross-Government Approach

Governments at all levels need to work together and model effective co-ordination and collaboration to support communities and effect long-term change. We need to replace discussions about jurisdiction with the enabling language of co-ordination and collaboration to achieve common goals and objectives.

- Identify provincial, regional and local cross-sectoral groups to champion bullying and non-violence initiatives.
- Develop a comprehensive, cross-sectoral business plan that ensures accountability for services and supports that are integrated and collaborative on all levels.
- Develop a comprehensive response plan developed by the Aboriginal community.
- Develop and provide on-going cross-sector training at the orientation and in-service levels that teach service providers the knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively and positively address bullying and violence.
- Increase resources – human and financial – to effectively enforce the consequences and/or treatment interventions that are necessary to stop family violence and bullying.
- Develop family violence and bullying as a cross-government strategy that is included in the government business plan as a 10-20 year plan.
- Federal and provincial governments need to co-operate and collaborate more at the regional level.

- Each relevant ministry should prioritize family violence and bullying within its mandate and put resources into an integrated, locally driven service model that can build on existing infrastructure and successful programs and services.
- Demonstrate cross-ministry endorsement by including family violence and bullying in business plans, with attached resources (i.e. financial and human).
- Facilitate interdepartmental collaboration on the front lines by building it in to department plans and job descriptions.
- Establish cross-ministerial agreements, similar to the Student Health Initiative Partnership, that includes joint accountability, clear performance and financial targets and sustained, long-term policy and funding support.

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>
> - Participant, regional workshop

3. Enabling Legislation

Many of the solutions envisioned in the roundtable process require a legislative or policy response.

General

- Introduce public policies that make it a legal obligation to report family violence and bullying.
- Implement legislation that enables a co-ordinated response and entrenches necessary services and supports in policy.
- Review and implement the recommendations from the Hurlburt-White report.
- Expand the Mental Health Act and Dependent Adult Act to provide better tools for responding to family violence.
- Include family violence/abuse of older adults in legislation to ensure that seniors who are victimized by family members in their own homes (outside of institutional care) have adequate protection from abuse and neglect (e.g. financial abuse, inadequate health care, social isolation).
- Review relevant legislation that may be contributing to the problem (e.g. Divorce Act, no-fault divorce).
- Introduce legislative reform that makes sure the safety, happiness and healthy development of children are primary considerations.
- Include sexual violence in the definitions of family violence in legislation and policy.
- Thoroughly analyze the jurisdictional issues and implications for Aboriginal communities and address these issues in legislation and policy to ensure service principles of relevancy consistency and parity apply to all Aboriginal people, regardless of where they live in Alberta (i.e. Hurlburt/White recommendations).

4. Long-Term, Cross-Sectoral Commitment

The commitment to ending family violence and bullying must be long-term. Change is not going to happen overnight but with a consistent effort over the long-term, we can make a difference. We need to accurately assess the problem and evaluate our actions against results, to ensure we are moving forward and making a positive difference to prevent and reduce the incidences of family violence and bullying.

General

- Develop long-term, solution-focused plans (seven to 10 year time horizon) that can withstand government/ministerial change.
- Develop common vision; goals, language and tools to support cross sector engagement.
- Review current funding models, processes and outcomes to determine if the issues of family violence and bullying have adequate policy and resource support.

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- Develop common vision; goals, language and tools to support cross sector engagement.
- Review current funding models, processes and outcomes to determine if the issues of family violence and bullying have adequate policy and resource support.

- Provide long-term and sustainable funding to programs and services that are proven to work.
- Provide adequate resources to community-based services – both financial and human – across a continuum, from prevention to follow-up.
- Develop partnership incentive funding models for private sector foundations, community organizations and government, to support community-based efforts.
- Measure results and then follow-through with the changes that are indicated by evaluation.

Key Theme 3: Collaborative, Co-operative Community Response

A collaborative response to family violence and bullying means the co-coordinated and timely delivery of a full range of services and supports from community-based prevention initiatives to emergency response when a crisis occurs, and outreach and follow-up over the longer term. Communities believe they are in the best position to determine and mobilize the appropriate partners, with clearly articulated accountabilities and adequate resources, to achieve desired outcomes for their communities.

Solutions:

1. Roles in Cross-Sectoral, Collaborative Model

The role of government is to set the legislative, policy and accountability frameworks to enable effective co-ordination and collaboration and ensure accountability for public dollars. However, local action needs to be co-ordinated and facilitated by local leaders. Systems and structures need to be in place to make it easy for community people and agencies to work together to support families and individuals who are impacted by family violence and bullying.

General

- Enable regional players – through legislation, funding models or other structures – to set priorities that are relevant to their own regions.
- Develop a community-level action plan with clear steps that specify: where to report violence; removal of the perpetrator; consequences and accountability; follow-up with victim and perpetrator; and long-term counselling.
- Develop a co-coordinated response model that includes prevention through outreach and follow-up with all responders, consistent assessment tools, clear standards/protocols, shared resources, joint evaluation, etc.
- Comprehensive response plans need to be developed by the Aboriginal community.
- Mobilize town/city council to provide clear leadership and direction on family violence and bullying with all local responders at the table (e.g. Cochrane violence-free community and Anti-bullying Task Force).
- Mobilize and support the local business community to be a responder to family violence and bullying (e.g. a victim could access services and support through a hairdresser).
- Engage banks and grocery stores in the prevention and response to elder abuse.
- Mobilize the community to diversify the funding base to include all levels of government, private and public foundations, community fundraising and corporate partners to ensure stability and sustainability of mandated and non-mandated services and supports in the community.
- Change interagency initiatives from networking groups to working groups with shared goals and priorities for action (i.e. an interagency "with teeth").
- Ensure service providers have formally allocated time within their respective portfolios to actively participate in community co-ordination and collaboration without compromising service delivery capacity.

- Bring community partners to the same room at the same time to discuss challenges and joint solutions and priorities.
- Community partners should be supported and accountable for joint planning and the development, delivery and evaluation of a community plan to prevent and respond to family violence and bullying.
- Recognize that models that work in urban areas may not work in rural areas, and vice versa.
- Include a full range of community partners, government, community and families at the community planning table that represent primary prevention approaches to crisis services.
- Ensure any new staff, particularly managers, regardless of their discipline, receive formal introduction to the other community planning partners and a cross-sectoral orientation to the community's way of working with the province, within the community and with families.
- Retain enough flexibility so that communities can build on their natural leadership, partnerships and capacities – which may or may not be the "cast of usual suspects."

Family Violence

- Every community should have a response plan that includes local training to increase effectiveness, reduce response times and monitor the danger to all members in high-risk families.

2. Supports for Collaboration

Albertans do not see top-down solutions as the answer to family violence and bullying. Although support from provincial leadership is a key to success, we heard that many individuals, groups and communities have come together to address many of these issues through community-level planning, co-ordination and action. Participants said they understand the problem of family violence and bullying in their communities, they know what needs to be done and, in many cases, they are already taking steps to respond to and prevent family violence and bullying. They want to build on this success to meet local needs and gaps. Communities need support from local, regional and provincial organizations and governments but they want to drive the action.

General

- Support collaborative models and systems with adequate funding and system co-ordination.
- Develop funding models that encourage collaboration rather than force competition among service providers.
- Explore funding models such as the Homelessness Initiative model to create an accessible pool of funding for collaborative initiatives.
- Provide funding for broad needs assessment research in each region based on local community capacities and needs.
- Support the development of local or regional inter-agency coalitions on family violence and bullying that can share/pool available resources decrease overlap and deliver a more co-ordinated response.
- Explore the merits of incorporation for inter-agencies.
- Explore the potential of regional governance agreements (e.g. Child and Family Services Authorities, Regional Health Authorities, Persons with Developmental Disabilities) for addressing family violence and bullying. Features of these agreements include appointed representatives, discussion of mutual issues and joint action on projects that have mutual/shared value.

- Ensure regional and community delivery staff have community co-ordination and collaboration in their job descriptions and/or collective agreements.
- Ensure community facilities are affordable to community programs and fully utilized through joint use and partnership agreements (e.g., after school care programs in schools and community centres).
- Support inter-faith groups to coordinate efforts and develop resources that can address family violence and bullying.
- Develop awards and formal commendations for "exemplary" police work that recognizes the inherent safety risks and skill levels required for effective family violence interventions.

> *"Provide incentives. Make it attractive to co-operate and collaborate."*
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> - Participant, Regional Workshop

3. Long-Term, Sustainable Solutions for Community Needs

Community volunteers and service providers told us they are being "burnt out" by changes and fragmented approaches that are driven by the various levels and departments of government. Demonstration and pilot projects with little or no support for ongoing operations and/or sustainability were often described as ineffective. They have in many cases created unhealthy competition for limited dollars and instability for qualified staff recruitment and retention, particularly in rural and remote areas. Effective funding models are needed to support a balance of building on success, adapting when necessary to achieve better outcomes and piloting new approaches and innovations with a view toward best practice.

General

- Develop funding models that are intended to be long term with clearly accountable for results and leave the program development and delivery responsibility to communities.
- Develop methods to track the actual costs and benefits of intervention in family violence and bullying.
- Prevention and early intervention programs need time to show results; positive effects are often demonstrated in multi-generational outcomes.
- Support longitudinal studies of Alberta-based prevention and early intervention programs to guide effective and sustainable social investments in the long-term.
- Businesses, communities and governments need to work together as partners at the provincial and community level, similar to Alberta's Promise, to find ways to jointly support and fund effective programs that can be sustained through the good times and the bad.
- Some communities are coordinating and integrating activities that can support more than one agency or organization (i.e. one crisis line, meeting space, joint administrative supports, and information centres).
- Look at developing partnerships between corporations and community agencies that swap specialized expertise and resources (i.e. financial analyst time for staff wellness training or employee assistance).

> *"We need to answer the question—where should funding be allocated for the best return?"*
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5. Cross-Sectoral Training

Governments, service providers and volunteers who are part of the full-spectrum response to family violence and bullying – from prevention to follow-up – need comprehensive training to understand and respond to the specific issues and dynamics of family violence and bullying. In particular, they need to be deliberate in assessing their direct and collective impact on those who have been impacted by violence and avoid "re-victimizing the victims" or "creating criminals" through uncoordinated or inconsistent policies, processes and procedures that are not supportive of individuals and families in need.

General

- Integrate cultural competence training into domestic violence and bullying response.
- Develop multi-disciplinary domestic violence training that can be incorporated into educational institutions and community-based training models that can be easily adapted for use by all stakeholders (e.g. educators, police, social workers, career counselors, faith community, parents, students, etc.).
- Provide cross-sector training on the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Health Information Act that clarifies what information can and cannot be shared by service providers.
- Establish diversity training that focuses on services and supports that can address the unique needs and experiences of special populations (e.g. ethnic and cultural communities, people with disabilities, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered).
- Train the full spectrum of service providers to recognize the signs of family violence and bullying and teach them effective intervention strategies.
- Train to a common language and understanding on family violence and bullying.
- Develop common protocols between community responders to determine what is family violence and bullying and how to provide a comprehensive and co-ordinated response.
- Recognize that the health professionals, particularly family doctors, are key players in recognizing and responding to family violence and bullying.
- Sensitize policy makers and service providers to the realities and experiences of people in the cycles created by family violence and bullying.
- Explore the potential for secondments and collaborative teams across services, as a means of breaking down turf mentality and providing cross-community training (e.g. police and social workers).
- Provide sensitivity training to police and child welfare to understand that women involved in prostitution are often victims of child abuse, sexual assault/abuse and long-term exposure to family violence.
- Provide mandatory, bias-free training for all police.
- Ensure policing leaders actively support activities and best practice training in family violence as a critical factor for success in their day-to-day work.
- Provide training to personnel in faith communities on their role in addressing family violence and bullying.
- Provide comprehensive training for school staff, parents and students on what bullying is and how it can be stopped.
- Develop specialized cross sector training to prevent and respond to sexual violence.

"Co-ordination should be facilitated by local leaders."

- Participant, regional workshop

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- Ensure policing leaders actively support activities and best practice training in family violence as a critical factor for success in their day-to-day work.
- Provide training to personnel in faith communities on their role in addressing family violence and bullying.
- Provide comprehensive training for school staff, parents and students on what bullying is and how it can be stopped.
- Develop specialized cross sector training to prevent and respond to sexual violence.

"Co-ordination should be facilitated by local leaders."

- Participant, regional workshop

6. Information Sharing

Information sharing refers to any strategy, system or process that makes it easier for service providers and other stakeholders to work together to meet the needs of people who have been impacted by family violence and bullying. Many saw the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP) and Health Information Act (HIA) as significant barriers to information sharing by service providers. However, many participants acknowledged that the barriers might be more perception than reality. Perception or reality, it remains a pertinent issue for service providers across Alberta.

General

- Implement a strategy to collect and share information and resources on family violence and bullying among all stakeholders.
- Develop a clearinghouse of speakers, resources, materials and best practices and provide easy access to the information by all stakeholders.
- Reduce the limitations (or perceived limitations) imposed by FOIPP and HIA on information sharing between agencies.
- Establish a violence registry database or other central databank that allows agencies to share and access timely information related to family violence and bullying.
- Review under what circumstances confidential disclosures might at some point be revealed (e.g. for security clearances).
- Governments and academic institutions could work more closely to get best practice information out to community partners and provincial associations in affordable ways (e.g. website links, electronic newsletters, conferences, Family and Community Resource Bank).
- Look at legislative or policy change that can make information sharing easier. Information sharing should be based, first and foremost, on the best interest of the individuals and families in need of supports and services, not on potential liability of service providers or protection of agency mandate.
- Develop information sharing protocols for communities to help local understanding of what actually can and can't be shared.
- Respect the value of learning and sharing through the wisdom of experience and allow time for this to happen (i.e. families, elders, victims, perpetrators).

7. Multidisciplinary Teams

Multidisciplinary teams are needed to respond to people affected by family violence and bullying in a comprehensive, seamless and holistic way. We need to ask, "Who will produce the best results for this individual?" Our focus should be on the individual, not on each organization's mandate. Services must be responsive and integrated, with access provided through a co-coordinated approach that focuses on the needs of those impacted by family violence and bullying.

General

- Structural and legislative changes are needed to establish and support a multi-disciplinary approach, including shared planning and pooled funding by all ministries.
- Build professional relationships and openly share information.
- Use standardized assessment tools to accurately and collectively assess the dangers and risks to the people in need of service and the service providers.
- Develop protocols that clearly define the roles and relationships of team members in the response to family violence and bullying.

- Involve justice on the team to ensure consistency and continuity.
- Establish multi-disciplinary teams that can provide an immediate initial response (i.e. first week) through family case conferencing.
- Ensure that multi-disciplinary teams receive joint training, support and opportunities to listen to and develop an understanding of each other's roles.
- Our approach to family violence and bullying needs to include spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical supports/services. The services we provide must acknowledge the basic need for love, purpose, and belonging.
- Multi-disciplinary teams need to support the experiences and realities of the family by "starting where the family is."
- Assign a case manager that supports the family from intake through to follow up.
- Build on the strengths and resiliency of families in a multi-disciplinary case plan.
- Family case conferencing must involve families, all the services and supports they need and a trusted person who can guide them through the entire process.
- Allow for interventions that involve all those impacted, including the victim and abuser, (e.g. talking circles/sentencing circles).
- Services need to make things right for all people involved, providing healing and closure.
- Families should be treated as a whole and receive services for as long as needed (i.e. longer than 18 months).
- Recognize the importance of self-care and safety for front-line workers to prevent burnout.
- Provide an opportunity for front-line workers to debrief after responding to an incidence of family violence or bullying.
- Provide training on vicarious trauma and how to manage it to those professionals/individuals who work in the area of family violence and bullying.
- Provide sabbaticals or other forms of relief (e.g. every four years) for counsellors and other front-line workers.

Key Theme 4: Services and Supports

People who are affected by family violence and bullying require a range of community-based services that ensure basic safety, support and healing. Solutions that include families, communities and governments are necessary to meet the needs of those affected by family violence and bullying and to prevent further incidences of violence.

Solutions:

1. Equitable Access to Services and Supports

Equitable access to services and supports for all Albertans was seen as critical to addressing family violence and bullying. Equitable access means that services and supports are accessible to all people, recognizing the unique needs of women, men, persons with disabilities, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered people, women who have been sexually exploited by prostitution, older adults and other identifiable groups.

Equitable access does not mean equal access. Most participants acknowledged that an equal level of services and supports cannot practically be provided in every community. However, participants viewed the need for transportation, as being pivotal to accessing needed services and supports, even if those resources were not provided in one's community.

> *"(Men) don't ask for help simply because the consequences are too great. Why bother asking for help, if it's just going to end up making your life worse?"*
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"(Men) don't ask for help simply because the consequences are too great. Why bother asking for help, if it's just going to end up making your life worse?"

- Focus group participant

Before Albertans can obtain services and supports to address family violence and bullying, they must be aware of those services/supports or, at least, know where to get more information and/or ways of finding assistance. There is a need to increase awareness among service providers and the general public of the services and supports that are currently available at the local, regional and provincial levels and how to access these services.

> ***"I never would have had to stay if my children and I could have immediately left, gotten into the car and drove to a safe shelter, but there is no place that will accept men with children."***
>
> **- Focus group participant**

2. Single Point of Access

The concept of a single point of access was identified in almost every group. People saw this as a means of bringing together agencies and professionals in an integrated service delivery model that could provide seamless access to supports and services for those affected by family violence and bullying. Some of the specific service providers mentioned by participants included police, justice, legal aid, social services, child protection, income support, housing, counselling, advocacy and victim services.

> ***"I think that we should be able to stay in our home with our children. It hurts our children when we make them change schools, and have this huge life change while (the perpetrator) stays in the same place."***
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> **- Focus group participant**

Many participants referred to the Family Justice Model in San Diego or a similar Phoenix program as successful programs, which should be considered by the province. Others recommended a broad base of services, so that those seeking assistance through the centre – whether victim, perpetrator or witness to violence – would not feel stigmatized. One group specifically suggested that this central agency be called the Comprehensive Agency Response Emergency (C.A.R.E.) Centre. Another group said, "de-institutionalize services, as some people don't want to walk into an AADAC, health unit or other public building."

Some solutions for a single point of access included the following:

- *Telephone access.* A 24-hour, province-wide telephone crisis line was identified as one way to improve access to services and supports for people in rural and remote communities. People said that a telephone-based service could address issues of personal safety and concerns about the stigma associated with seeking help for family violence and bullying. The number should be simple – like 911 – so that everyone can remember it. Rural participants talked about the need for an "agricultural" crisis line to address high stress for farm families, particularly in the current BSE crisis and drought conditions.
- *School access.* Schools were seen as an important access site for both individuals and families affected by family violence and bullying. While some felt that schools should be provided with resources to offer direct support services, particularly for bullying, others felt that schools could play a broker role in connecting people to existing community-based services.
- *Workplace access.* Access to service and supports through the workplace could help reduce the stigma of seeking help. This was typically seen as a brokering function, where information was provided on how individuals could be connected to services in the community, rather than the direct delivery of services. The workplace was also seen as an important site for education about family violence and bullying.

- *Agency co-location.* A number of communities talked about neighbourhood centres and resource centres where a number of programs and services are available under one roof. It was suggested that including prevention initiatives, early intervention programs and treatment services in one location could reduce the stigma of accessing services for family violence and bullying.
- *Family advocacy centres.* Many communities suggested working toward family advocacy centres as a community governed, cross-sectoral option to addressing family violence. A valuable strategy would be to include information and services which span the continuum from prevention to outreach and follow-up featuring co-location of a multitude of community-based organization and regional service delivery partners engaged in preventing and responding to family violence and bullying. (i.e. court services, policing, justice, child and family services, health services, shelters, sexual violence services, community education and awareness, victims services, immigrant services, disability support organizations, housing, social services.)
- *Advanced technology.* The application of advanced communication technologies could be expanded to mental health and other direct services through video conferencing and on-line access to resources and supports. Participants talked about the positive potential for interventions through on-line information, counseling and support for those unable to access services through other means. This discussion was balanced with caution for the loose security and standards of the Internet chat rooms, the potential for exploitation and what was termed "cyberbullying" of vulnerable individuals and families.

3. Safe Reporting

People who are impacted by family violence and bullying need to feel secure and confident that there are mechanisms in place to report violence and bullying in their homes, schools and communities.

General

- Community members could be encouraged to report through anonymous reporting systems; neighbourhood watches; lobby groups; peer protection programs; and/or community meetings.
- Newspapers, television, radio, posters, brochures at all services and community buildings and door- to-door flyers need to be used to increase awareness of what, how and who victims can report to and what they can expect when they do.
- Ensure all service providers, coaches, churches, school support staff, pre-schools, daycares, health practitioners, community programs and parents and others in positions of trust receive frequent information through training and information on what to do to report violence and abuse.
- Youth and children, in particular, need to be provided with a step-by-step escape plan and encouraged to talk to a trusted friend or go to the police, Social Services or other service providers if they find themselves in a violent or abusive situation. Through awareness and education campaigns, youth and children should be encouraged to talk to a trusted friend or go to police, social services, shelters, etc. if they find themselves in a violent situation.

"I will go to my (cultural) community to pray, let's say, but I would never mention anything I'm going through."

- Focus group participant

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4. Advocates/Advocacy

Advocacy was a common theme that was used to describe any individual, agency or process that would help people who had been affected by family violence or bullying find their way through the system. Others described an advocate as someone who could be a "supportive voice for those who feel voiceless."

Family Violence

- Provide practical assistance, both financial and human, to help victims safely escape violent situations.
- Enhance the scope of victims' services as a point of early intervention in family violence situations.
- Recognize the issues and barriers for a person in crisis. An effective community response would guide all those impacted to find the supports and services they need.
- Provide an advocate for all children impacted by family violence not just those in the care of government.
- Expand the scope of Healthy Families program to allow family support workers to stay with a family, from the start to finish.
- Engage advocates to prepare and support those impacted by family violence in the court process.
- Service providers and multi-disciplinary teams involved in services could openly include a formal or informal advocate chosen by the individual or family to be part of the process.

> ***"I paid $275 per month for one room, that's all. A single bed, that's it. And I was told I'm just allowed to rent a place for one month because (of)...my child. So after one month I really have nowhere to go."***
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5. Emergency/Safe Housing

Although many people argued that victims of family violence should not be further victimized by having to leave their homes and communities, most acknowledged that emergency accommodation was a necessary service. Participants identified the need to increase access to emergency shelter space for all victims of family violence.

> ***"There's a great need for (safe houses) for elderly abused people. I have tried other places before I came here and they were always full and those places catered to families – women with children."***
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Family Violence

- Increase access to safe houses/emergency shelters for those who need emergency protection including women, children, youth, men, persons with disabilities, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, and expand options for older adults.
- Provide a "cooling off" place for perpetrators (e.g. seven-day cooling off period) that offers programs and services, counselling and legal advice. This is in recognition of the escalation of violence and tragic outcomes that frequently follow the issue of emergency protection orders, restraining orders and enforcement of court orders relative to custody and access disputes.
- Recognize that emergency accommodation can be provided in many ways, from a safe house in a community to a full service shelter. Safety is the key.

6. Transitional Supports

Women and men who have left relationships because of family violence need financial and other supports to help them and their families move forward.

Family Violence

- Provide lump-sum financial support to help victims of family violence and their children get re-established.
- Structure income support to enable support for those leaving abusive situations and to loosen guidelines/eligibility criteria for victims of family violence.
- Increase the availability of second stage housing.
- Provide life skills training for victims to help them successfully leave and stay out of violent relationships.
- Provide paid job training to victims who have left violent situations to enhance independence and the likelihood of long-term employability.
- Make day care more accessible and affordable for low-income/single parent families.
- Provide services and supports to youth as part of transitional supports when they have left a violent situation.
- Establish a "victims of violence" fund to provide support to victims of family violence and bullying. This fund could be resourced, in part, through a "fine diversion" program.
- Provide victims of family violence and bullying with legal representation or financial support during the legal process.

> ***"You're on a list somewhere to get counseling and you're on a list somewhere to get daycare and a list to get college.... (You're) on all these lists and you get tired of waiting and waiting."***
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7. Treatment and Counselling

Treatment and the opportunity to heal should be available to all people who are affected by family violence and bullying – victims, abusers and those exposed to the violence and abuse.

General

- Provide continuous services and supports for an appropriate term to allow transition, rather than time-limited programs.
- Reduce waiting times for counselling.
- Offer free or sliding scale counselling to those impacted by family violence and bullying.
- Develop improved community-based support systems for individuals and families who experience family violence and bullying (e.g. peer groups, church groups, support groups for specific cultural and societal groups etc.).
- Implement a process that teaches that hope and resiliency are possible and part of the transition process.
- Avoid models that create dependencies on individual service providers, programs or other supports.
- Develop treatment models that reflect best practice on holistic healing practices.
- Work together to design and implement the use of healing circles that are based in Aboriginal values and model a holistic approach to break the cycle of violence and bullying.
- Provide trained professionals (e.g. psychologists) in schools, allocated on a population basis, to assist teachers with strategies to manage the behaviours and effects associated with family violence and bullying within the school setting.
- Provide specialized programs, facilities and resources for youth and adults with developmental/mental health issues to give them the appropriate tools to deal with family violence and bullying.
- Bring back the concept of mobile mental health teams in remote areas.

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> *"I got the length of time I needed. I wasn't told you have to leave in three weeks. I was told I could stay until you recover."*
>
> - Client of senior safe house

Family Violence

- Establish a support network that will provide long-term support and/or services to both family violence victims and perpetrators to break the 12 to 15 month "re-offense" cycle.
- Establish effective court mandated treatment for perpetrators and ensure it is available across the province.
- Expand the HomeFront early intervention and mandated and non-mandated treatment services for perpetrators of family violence across Alberta.
- Increase access to treatment for perpetrators, particularly in smaller communities.
- Provide decentralized, local and free treatment services for perpetrators.
- Provide appropriate treatment interventions for the significant numbers of family violence victims and perpetrators, male and female, which have histories of sexual abuse.
- Establish mandatory case conferencing methods involving all family members and relevant service providers who can respond to the unique circumstances of the family and the power and resource imbalances that may exist between partners.
- Enforce mandatory course attendance and engagement, not just "doing your time." There is a perception that the rules are different for those in rural areas than those in urban areas.
- Increase access to treatment programs for offenders who live in rural areas, either by bringing the service to the individual or providing support (e.g. transportation) to attend programs in other areas.
- Provide specialized counselling and support for children who have been exposed to family violence.
- Establish support groups for male victims of family violence.
- Recognize that men can be victims too and need treatment and counselling services
- Provide follow-up to help people affected by family violence and bullying reintegrate into their faith communities.
- Support comprehensive models to address all issues of all family members impacted by family violence.

> *"Every program has to end – but they make it end too soon. Sure we're going to put you in this program, but it's a 30-day program. Some people need more than 30 days."*
>
> - Focus group participant

Bullying

- Provide mentoring and support to help bullies integrate into the school community, rather than dismissing them too quickly.
- Provide retraining, teaching of alternatives and impact awareness to children who bully others.
- Explore innovative school programs such as buddy systems, youth leadership, school liaisons and after-school programs.
- Develop and expand restorative justice programs to address bullying, such as community conferencing.
- Provide resources for a full-time counsellor in junior and senior high schools.

8. Protection Services

More must be done to protect people victimized by family violence to reduce risk and prevent further incidences or escalation.

> *"It is very sad that most Albertans can provide a ready answer on what to do if they suspect the abuse of a puppy, but most can't do the same for a woman and her children in the very same neighbourhood. We need to change that."*
>
> – Elected official, regional workshop

Family Violence

- Provide for immediate removal of the perpetrator and ongoing surveillance after an incident.
- Consistent and appropriate family violence response by police teams "every time" is critical to long-term victim safety and to breaking the cycle.
- Assess the level of risk to victims immediately following the issue of emergency protection orders, restraining orders and custody and access breaches.
- Understanding and responding to the risk for children exposed to family violence needs to be fundamental in police enforcement and child welfare practice.
- Establish family violence response teams for police to refer to when criminal charges are not warranted.
- Develop consistent and multi-disciplinary risk assessment and screening tools through a collaborative process with service providers and people who have been affected by family violence and/or bullying.
- Provide dignified and safe access to the medical examinations needed when incidents of family violence and bullying occur, particularly for victims of sexual violence.
- Sexual violence was considered too vastly underreported and that special attention to public awareness is needed to encourage safe reporting, training for service providers with strong sensitivity to the correct procedures and implications for court process.
- Implement a family violence screening tool and community-based response strategy in all emergency rooms in Alberta.
- Provide one number access for communities to access information of how to appropriately assess safety risk and appropriately respond to family violence.
- Establish a system, similar to the Amber Alert System that would alert victims to restraining order violations or other risks.

9. Custody and Access

Custody and access disputes are at the center of many tragic circumstances where family violence is a factor. People across the province – male and female, young and old – all agreed that custody and access discussions, court orders and follow-up supports must first and foremost focus on safety and the overall best interests of the child. Family connections were considered important - but not at all costs.

General

- In custody and access disputes, appoint an advocate who is independent of the parent's legal counsel to ensure the best interests of children who have been impacted by family violence are the primary consideration in the entire legal process.
- Ensure new legislation that recognizes history of violence against an intimate partner or spouse is a likely indicator of future violence against others, including children, and puts the responsibility on the abuser to prove otherwise (i.e. examples cited custody orders granted to abusers although there is a long and clear history of severe violence against a partner).

> *"I got the length of time I needed. I wasn't told you have to leave in three weeks. I was told I could stay until you recover."*
>
> **- Client of senior safe house**

Family Violence

- Establish a support network that will provide long-term support and/or services to both family violence victims and perpetrators to break the 12 to 15 month "re-offense" cycle.
- Establish effective court mandated treatment for perpetrators and ensure it is available across the province.
- Expand the HomeFront early intervention and mandated and non-mandated treatment services for perpetrators of family violence across Alberta.
- Increase access to treatment for perpetrators, particularly in smaller communities.
- Provide decentralized, local and free treatment services for perpetrators.
- Provide appropriate treatment interventions for the significant numbers of family violence victims and perpetrators, male and female, which have histories of sexual abuse.
- Establish mandatory case conferencing methods involving all family members and relevant service providers who can respond to the unique circumstances of the family and the power and resource imbalances that may exist between partners.
- Enforce mandatory course attendance and engagement, not just "doing your time." There is a perception that the rules are different for those in rural areas than those in urban areas.
- Increase access to treatment programs for offenders who live in rural areas, either by bringing the service to the individual or providing support (e.g. transportation) to attend programs in other areas.
- Provide specialized counselling and support for children who have been exposed to family violence.
- Establish support groups for male victims of family violence.
- Recognize that men can be victims too and need treatment and counselling services
- Provide follow-up to help people affected by family violence and bullying reintegrate into their faith communities.
- Support comprehensive models to address all issues of all family members impacted by family violence.

> *"Every program has to end – but they make it end too soon. Sure we're going to put you in this program, but it's a 30-day program. Some people need more than 30 days."*
>
> **- Focus group participant**

Bullying

- Provide mentoring and support to help bullies integrate into the school community, rather than dismissing them too quickly.
- Provide retraining, teaching of alternatives and impact awareness to children who bully others.
- Explore innovative school programs such as buddy systems, youth leadership, school liaisons and after-school programs.
- Develop and expand restorative justice programs to address bullying, such as community conferencing
- Provide resources for a full-time counsellor in junior and senior high schools.

8. Protection Services

More must be done to protect people victimized by family violence to reduce risk and prevent further incidences or escalation.

> ***"It is very sad that most Albertans can provide a ready answer on what to do if they suspect the abuse of a puppy, but most can't do the same for a woman and her children in the very same neighbourhood. We need to change that."***
>
> **– Elected official, regional workshop**

Family Violence

- Provide for immediate removal of the perpetrator and ongoing surveillance after an incident.
- Consistent and appropriate family violence response by police teams "every time" is critical to long-term victim safety and to breaking the cycle.
- Assess the level of risk to victims immediately following the issue of emergency protection orders, restraining orders and custody and access breaches.
- Understanding and responding to the risk for children exposed to family violence needs to be fundamental in police enforcement and child welfare practice.
- Establish family violence response teams for police to refer to when criminal charges are not warranted.
- Develop consistent and multi-disciplinary risk assessment and screening tools through a collaborative process with service providers and people who have been affected by family violence and/or bullying.
- Provide dignified and safe access to the medical examinations needed when incidents of family violence and bullying occur, particularly for victims of sexual violence.
- Sexual violence was considered too vastly underreported and that special attention to public awareness is needed to encourage safe reporting, training for service providers with strong sensitivity to the correct procedures and implications for court process.
- Implement a family violence screening tool and community-based response strategy in all emergency rooms in Alberta.
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- Establish a "Children's Lawyer" to represent the children's interest in custody and access disputes.
- Build on the custody and access recommendations in the family law reform process.
- Provide safe custody and access centres for visitation and exchange of children involved in custody and access disputes.
- Develop "child-friendly" safe visitation and exchange sites.
- Provide appropriate training for all service providers involved in safe visitation and involved in safe exchanges.
- Ensure full disclosure of all information in custody and access disputes; all history is relevant in the safety of a child.
- Ensure judges have comprehensive training in family violence, including the impacts on children exposed to family violence.
- Comprehensive assessments of risk to family members should be court ordered, before custody and access is granted, whenever there is a history of family violence; safety plans should be collaboratively developed accordingly.
- Listen to the child.
- Develop less adversarial legal processes in child custody cases that focus on the best interests of the child.
- Change the adversarial approach to agreements after separation to build positive and inclusive parental involvement in the decisions that will affect their children's future.
- Develop alternate dispute resolution options for custody and access. This is an exclusive vs. inclusive criteria for ADR programs. Programs can't mediate if there has been violence because of the power differential.
- Enforce full consequences for infringement of the conditions set out in custody and access orders.
- Consider keeping children connected to extended family whenever it is safe and appropriate to the circumstances.

10. Ensuring Responsiveness to Those Impacted

To be truly responsive and accountable to those impacted by family violence and bullying, we need to listen? Intentionally? Attentively to their voices and recognize the uniqueness of their experiences. We heard many personal stories from men, women, youth and family members who wear the long term consequences as scars on their bodies and souls, from the murder of a child to permanent disfiguration, from long term emotional damage to suicide. These were people often disbelieved and marginalized by their communities, by service providers and often by their own families. We also heard stories from victims, perpetrators, parents and youth who encountered caring, competent people who were there with empathy, commitment and the appropriate response to support positive change and hope for the future.

> *"Disabled people need a unique type of assistance that recognizes their situation and realities."*
>
> - Focus group participant

General

- Listen.
- Ensure enough time can be spent with victims to adequately assess and offer appropriate support and safety planning (i.e. enhanced victims services on police teams).
- Respond as a helper not a mandate.
- Develop common intake and assessment processes that ask the questions once, asking for help should be the only step a victim takes alone.
- For some people, it is one thing to have been victimized and it is another to carry the burden and label of being a victim.

- We all need to examine our own norms and biases when we are dealing with difficult and uncomfortable situations.
- Treat every incident seriously even if there is a history of interventions.
- Evaluate each individual's experience with treatment programs.
- Increase the focus on healing and treatment; help people to know there is hope.
- Be aware of personal and systemic biases that might influence how we respond to people who are seeking help – whether perpetrator or victim.
- Remove systemic barriers that stand in the way of ready access to needed service for people in crisis (i.e. passport requirements to access services).
- All of us need to act and be that one person who makes a difference.
- Parents, community members and service providers need to treat all children and youth with the respect they expect (i.e. Expect Respect).
- Make school environments caring environments and require it from school staff.
- Listen, watch and look for positive intervention opportunities with young people marginalized by their peers.

"It's hard enough to tell your parents that you are with somebody who is a same sex partner let alone tell them that you've left them or that it's not safe."

- Focus group participant

11. The Courts and Justice System

There must be more timely access to justice through the court system, for both perpetrators and victims. Many people said that victims of family violence need adequate legal representation or financial support for an effective legal process. These services must be in place to recognize the needs of those most impacted by family violence.

General

- Establish separate and specialized domestic violence courts across Alberta, with mandatory treatment that is funded to levels that meet the demand for services.
- Establish a unified family court system.
- Ensure full disclosure of all relevant information, particularly in custody and access disputes.
- Reform the bail review process to ensure people who should remain in custody (to protect the victim) do so.
- Expand the "Sitting Justice of Peace" program (Calgary) to other communities.
- Integrate family violence training as a condition of becoming a sitting judge.
- Provide training to all judges, crown prosecutors and legal aid lawyers.
- Provide joint training on children exposed to family violence to all child welfare, crown prosecutors and judges to ensure that the new Child and Family Enhancement Act provisions are understood, appropriately interpreted and acted upon.
- Implement tougher consequences for perpetrators who do not follow through on the conditions of their sentencing.
- Implement the recommendations in the Hurlburt and White Report.
- Ensure danger/threat assessments and safety planning (that includes potential for retaliation by extended family or community members) are made available to victims before the court determines conditions.

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Bullying

- Implement and enforce a provincial statute on bullying (similar to the Edmonton bullying bylaw).

(Note: There were contradictory suggestions as bullying participants also indicated that some communities have determined that legislation was not the answer in addressing bullies.)

> ***"The most important thing is to have knowledge where to go...by luck I found in my mailbox an invitation for a general meeting (of an immigrant support agency) and that was the breakthrough for me."***
>
> **- Focus group participant**

Key Theme 5: Accountability

Ultimate accountability and effective solutions must respond to those directly and indirectly impacted by family violence and bullying. This will require a strong balance between ongoing consultation with communities and evidence-based practice.

1. Evidence-Based Practices

Co-operation and collaboration means developing and supporting those programs, services and strategies that will have the greatest impact on family violence and bullying. To do that, we need to evaluate what works and what does not work among our current programming, look at best practices elsewhere and agree to fund and support those initiatives that are likely to deliver the best results and stop supporting those that do not.

General

- Implement a service audit to identify those programs that work.
- Invest in and expand effective programs and services that are being offered now, rather than developing new ones.
- Explore evidence-based services and best practices from all over the world. Implement those programs and services that are proven to work.
- Track and examine the depth of family violence and bullying. Statistics are important to show the need for services and how/where to apply funding.
- Provide support for Alberta evidence-based research that helps us better understand the high prevalence and full scope of experiences and impacts of those who are victims or perpetrators of family violence including men, women, children and other community members.
- Develop a best practices repository and incorporate into cross-sector training/modeling and service delivery.

Family Violence

- Develop a cross-sector family violence death review committee to learn from the deaths attributed to family violence and prevent future tragedies.

Bullying

- Explore the use of proven programs like Roots of Empathy.
- Continue to support province-wide initiatives such as Safe and Caring Schools and Effective Behavior Supports that teach, model and reinforce strategies for building and maintaining positive and caring school communities.
- Map out and track where bullying incidents occur in a community. Use this information to develop appropriate interventions.

- Build on the National Crime Prevention Centre's best practices study on bullying.
- Engage youth in collecting and sharing effective practices on strategies to promote a positive school environment and to stop bullying and harassment.
- Explore the effectiveness of strength-based resiliency and asset development approaches versus the zero tolerance approach to prevent bullying behaviours in schools and communities.

2. Measurable Outcomes

We need to establish clear, measurable outcomes that allow us to assess the effectiveness of our programs, services and supports. However, we must not lose sight of the person by putting too much focus on numbers and dollars.

3. Transparency and Reporting

The importance of reporting results and ensuring fiscal accountability was clear. However, participants said funders need to streamline reporting and business planning practices and to use consistent language and approaches to achieving outcomes that support a co-ordinated and collaborative response.

General

- Reporting practices need to be simple with clear accountabilities.
- Outcome-based reporting needs to be consistent among government departments to reduce the time agencies spend in administration.
- Use the logic model approach to plan, develop and evaluate effective services.
- Governments, community funders and private foundations could make grant applications consistent and work together to set joint priorities or determine their individual niche based on desired outcomes for the whole community.
- Reflect the focus on community-based outcomes in cross-government planning and priorities.

4. Consequences and Individual Accountability

Accountability was a major theme of the regional workshops and focus groups. Many people talked about the need to hold people accountable for their behaviors, saying that there appears to be insufficient and inconsistent consequences for so many violent behaviors in today's society. Participants also said that people who witness or suspect family violence – and do nothing about it – should be held accountable for their silence.

> ***"The consequences need to be a deterrent. These are horrible crimes that have endangered the lives and affected all our lives and the consequences aren't sufficient."***
>
> **- Focus group participant**

General

- Amend the Criminal Code to give judges and lawyers more flexibility in determining consequences for family violence and bullying.
- Establish appropriate consequences for family violence and bullying, both publicly and legally.
- Use alternate dispute resolution mechanisms and healing practices, such as restorative justice and family mediation, when deemed safe for all family members.
- Establish in legislation a requirement to report family violence and bullying and enforce it.
- Add children exposed to family violence under the requirement to report child abuse.

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- Establish in legislation a requirement to report family violence and bullying and enforce it.
- Add children exposed to family violence under the requirement to report child abuse.

(Note: the following section reflects conflicting input from workshops)

Family Violence

- Use the Prostitution Offender program ("John's School") model for families that have been affected by family violence, to allow offenders and their families to learn and heal together, where appropriate, rather than face criminal charges.
- Look at alternatives to zero-tolerance policies that can result in criminalization of first time offenders who might benefit more from treatment and support.
- Review sentencing practices, particularly minimal sentences and early release.
- Explore alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly in familial property and custody and access disputes.
- Make the consequences for family violence at least as serious as an assault on a stranger.
- Perjury and misrepresentation in domestic violence cases should have consequences.

Bullying

- Focus on resolution/mediation rather than punishment.
- Establish consequences for "bystanders" who do not intervene in bullying.
- Have a Life Skills worker meet with youth suspended from school for bullying to help make suspension a constructive punishment.

Key Theme 6: Aboriginal Communities

Aboriginal people in Alberta represent many different voices and many different communities, from isolated communities in northern Alberta to inner city urban populations in Edmonton and Calgary. Despite these differences, there are many similarities in the experience of family violence and bullying in Aboriginal communities and among Aboriginal people.

The themes we heard frequently are clearly captured in a written statement from one of the communities:

> *"The concept of healing and the focus on wellness demand a strategy that is different from the current responses to family violence. There is inconsistency between a solution that seeks harmony and balance, among the individuals, family and community, and one that is crisis-oriented, punishes the abuser and separates the family and community. The traditional Aboriginal approach to healing is holistic including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being guided by traditional values and principles of the Elders and community. This process involves decolonization and reclaiming identity and in doing so we will contribute to healing ourselves. This does not negate the significance of mainstream/scientific approaches rather the need to respect and honour one another's work."*

Colonization and the tremendous multi-generational impact of residential schools on communities, families and individuals were frequently heard themes. Many participants discussed the negative impact and scarring of generations of people who grew up within the residential school period. Separated from family and community, children were disassociated with their culture, their values, and normalized relationships of loving family and supportive community.

Traditional values and the natural laws– including caring, sharing, trust, honor, honesty, love, respect kinship and spirituality – which many see as key to preventing family violence and bullying, need to be revitalized in Aboriginal communities by the communities themselves. Although most people said these experiences have to be acknowledged and taught to their young people. many said it is time to move forward and not continue to lay blame. Further, they said that forgiveness must begin with taking individual responsibility. In order to break the cycle of violence, participants said we must approach the healing with compassion, not judgment, and that any initiative on family violence and bullying must be driven in and by their own communities and supported by leadership and governments.

> *"Prayers are the strong thing. If we all speak up – we can make a difference."*
>
> - Aboriginal Elder

Solutions:

1. Building Community Capacity

Actions to address family violence and bullying need to start with community awareness and understanding of the issue, particularly in communities where violence can come to be seen as normal by many. The issues need to be defined from an Aboriginal perspective, within a holistic view that includes all governments, family members, abusers, service providers and community. A 'one size fits all' general public media campaign will not have strong impact in Aboriginal communities. Approaches designed and developed with Aboriginal communities are needed to ensure meaning and relevance to Aboriginal people.

Things have changed in Aboriginal communities. A lack of trust and honesty has wounded relationships and Aboriginal people have lost their natural support systems. Communities need to engage in redefining what community means to them and how they can better support each other.

> *"When we depart, our words will travel with us."*
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Services and supports that help to build healthy, resilient children and families is a critical need in Aboriginal communities. The loss of connection with traditional parenting practices by those who attended residential schools and subsequent generations resulted in an intergovernmental phenomenon of trauma that must be addressed in meaningful ways in a contemporary environment.

As in mainstream society, safety is a key concern for those impacted by family violence and bullying. This includes safe reporting channels, safe houses and safety after the immediate crisis.

A critical issue for addressing family violence and bullying is leadership. It must start with band council, Elders and spiritual leaders. Aboriginal people need to heal as a community and that will only happen if their leaders are solidly behind this action. They need positive role models from their own families and communities who can teach appropriate values and behaviors.

"Poverty is real and alive in many Aboriginal peoples' lives". It is a significant contributor to many social problems, including family violence and bullying. The grassroots voice in the communities has to be rallied. Aboriginal people have to empower their communities to make family violence and bullying a community issue.

General

- Programs designed that are not culturally sensitive need to be examined and contextualized to relate to the people whom they are being delivered.
- Expand programs such as Early Headstart and Success by 6 in Aboriginal communities and develop similar programs for youth.
- Develop a program to teach/re-teach parenting skills to parents and future parents in our communities.

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- Build on the traditional approach to child rearing that recognizes the community's role and responsibility toward children.
- Involve Elders in teaching children about kindness, empathy, respect and patience through positive role modeling.
- Provide more opportunities for children and families to get involved in healthy programs and activities in Aboriginal communities.
- Involve Elders and spiritual leaders to provide guidance.
- Band leaders must come forward as part of the solution.
- Encourage leaders to share their own personal testimonials about family violence and bullying and their vision of hope, healing and reconciliation.
- Involve men and women equally in finding solutions.
- Identify champions who are trusted and well-regarded in our communities, to bring people together around the issues of family violence and bullying

"Our issues come back, time and time again to the same struggle among our people—feelings of grief, fear and shame."

- Workshop participant,
Aboriginal self-select group

2. Holistic Approach that Reflects Culture and Tradition

Services and supports in Aboriginal communities must be designed to nurture the whole person and to include families and the community in the healing process. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers must work with communities to identify what they need, and to find ways to integrate cultural practices and traditional methodologies.

Treatment and healing in Aboriginal communities should emphasize compassion over judgement, family healing over individual treatment and punishment and community wholeness over separation.

General

- Support traditional healing approach rather than focusing on the negative effects of violence and abuse.
- Provide case conferencing that treats the whole family.
- Expand sentencing circles – currently only offered for youth – to the adult population.
- Provide healing circles that include the immediate and extended family.
- Involve Elders in the healing process.
- Provide follow-up care for the period after the crisis.
- Provide long-term co-ordinated and integrated services that stay with a family long enough for them to gain some strength and see some hope.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Aboriginal children's clinic, planned for Northeast Calgary, that will be community-based and community-driven, offering a range of health services and preventative initiatives.
- Work towards a shared agenda with time, resources and research that include holistic and healing best practices.

3. Education, Training, and Awareness

Participants said provide education, training and awareness about family violence and bullying to all members of our communities – from child to elder. Participants said we need to understand why violence has increased in our communities, looking particularly at the influence of colonialism and the residential schools experience on individuals, families and community. Through education, we can encourage cultural pride in our children and help them to understand that family violence and bullying are not a natural part of Aboriginal culture.

People/professionals who work in Aboriginal communities must be trained to understand the history, culture and historical causes of violence. There is a perception that service providers are apathetic about violence in Aboriginal communities and need to be taught to care enough to make a difference.

General

- Offer family-based programs that help all family members learn/re-learn healthy patterns and behaviors.
- Teach practical living skills but also ensure that the individual has been provided with a foundation of self-esteem and confidence.
- Change unhealthy beliefs while respecting traditions.
- Define healthy relationships in a holistic, Aboriginal context.
- Create a positive safe environment within communities where members are able to heal and practice healthy expectable behavior.
- Nurture practices and lifestyles that reflect balance and positive healthy relationships.
- Appreciate that social forms are not universally understood and that individuals need to be introduced to and taught how to thrive within western society, as well, not forgetting that Aboriginal culture has many unique strengths to offer within western society.
- Provide opportunities for workers within the service and support field to evaluate their own perceptions and cultural understandings prior to working with Aboriginal populations (cultural training).
- Provide community orientation with established protocols by the community to all new service and support workers

"Things have been going on for too long. Walking away is not an option."

- *Workshop participant, Aboriginal self-select group*

4. Addressing Stereotypes and Racism

Racism and systemic abuse has a significant negative effect on Aboriginal people, families and communities. Action must be taken to challenge negative attitudes and misperceptions about First Nation and Metis peoples that persist in mainstream society.

General

- Develop effective public awareness and education programs to address issues related to racism, negative stereotypes and misperceptions about Aboriginal people.
- Establish Aboriginal cultural awareness training at all levels: schools, community, workplace and service agencies.

"We need to put aside our grievances and be responsible now."

- Workshop participant,
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- Build on the traditional approach to child rearing that recognizes the community's role and responsibility toward children.
- Involve Elders in teaching children about kindness, empathy, respect and patience through positive role modeling.
- Provide more opportunities for children and families to get involved in healthy programs and activities in Aboriginal communities.
- Involve Elders and spiritual leaders to provide guidance.
- Band leaders must come forward as part of the solution.
- Encourage leaders to share their own personal testimonials about family violence and bullying and their vision of hope, healing and reconciliation.
- Involve men and women equally in finding solutions.
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5. Access to Services

Aboriginal people experience numerous barriers to services that include physical barriers (e.g. isolation, distance to services, lack of transportation), as well as intangible or systemic barriers raised by misperceptions, racism and lack of knowledge/understanding about Aboriginal culture.

General

- Build ongoing and comprehensive response plans in each community.
- Establish a centralized service in each community for people impacted by family violence and bullying to access services. This can be a referral service rather than an actual place.
- Establish a family service centre for one-stop access to services and supports for families.
- Involve more people in Victim Services. Review the criterion that says victim advocates cannot have a relative living in the community who has a criminal record.
- Provide equitable funding across Aboriginal communities, with program funding for both on and off reserve and outside communities (cannot have a two-tiered system).
- Establish a telephone crisis line for family violence and bullying.
- Provide some sort of emergency response device (i.e. panic button or telephone with crisis line connection only) to people who are at high risk or in life threatening situations (many homes do not have a telephone).
- Provide emergency shelters/safe houses for extended families.
- Provide services for males – programs, resources and shelters.
- Support urban women's shelters that are specific to Aboriginal women and their needs.
- Invite Elders into emergency shelters to provide traditional guidance, support and healing.
- Provide safe visitation centres in every community.
- Develop a program similar to Block Parents that puts a "Safe House" sign in the door/window of homes that can provide assistance in a crisis.
- Increase the availability of second stage housing and facilities.
- Provide basic life skills/orientation to Aboriginal people moving to urban areas (e.g. public transit, shopping, banking, medical, community supports, social services and schools).

"Change needs to happen from inside our community. It needs to be the people themselves who get it going."

- Workshop participant, Aboriginal self-select group

6. Co-operation with non-Aboriginal Communities

Aboriginal communities want ownership of their own programs and services but want to partner with non-Aboriginal service providers in delivering those programs and services. Participants said we need to help non-Aboriginal service providers learn about, and participate in, Aboriginal communities.

General

- Establish programs in Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal wellness centres that provide comprehensive training/education to individuals and organizations that want to work in those communities and with Aboriginal people.
- Harmonize methodical/scientific approaches used by mainstream organizations/institutions with respect and honour for Aboriginal approaches.
- Establish a provincial family violence team to look at collaboration and co-operation among Aboriginal communities and adjoining communities.

7. Addressing Jurisdictional Issues

Many funding bodies contribute to territoriality and other "turf" issues through their own processes and criteria. Funders have the power to require/ recommend partnering, sharing resources and other forms of co-operation and collaboration even if these relationships are not equitable, valuable, or manageable.

The frequenc*y* and severity of family violence and bullying in Aboriginal communities requires creative solutions. Efeective partnerships across all levels of government: municipal, provincial and federal, are required to ensure safety and healthy development for children, families and communities. One strategy may be the establishment of a provincial family violence team to look at collaboration and co-operation between Aboriginal communities and neighboring communities.

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APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following terms were used throughout the roundtable process to describe and discuss family violence and its many forms. Definitions were drawn or adapted from a variety of sources to begin to establish a common understanding of family violence among participants.

Family Violence

Family violence is the abuse of power within relationships of family, trust or dependency that endangers the survival, security or well being of another person. It can include many forms of abuse including spouse abuse, senior abuse and neglect, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse, parent abuse and witnessing the abuse of others in the family. Family violence may include some or all of the following behaviours:

- **Physical abuse** – slapping, hitting, punching, kicking, biting, shoving, choking, or using a weapon or other object to threaten or injure the victim. It can and sometimes does result in death. All forms of physical violence are crimes under the Criminal Code.

- **Psychological abuse** – rejecting, degrading, terrorizing, isolating, being emotionally unresponsive and corrupting or exploiting the other person. Psychological abuse also includes threats, forcible confinement, harming pets, damaging property or criminal harassment, which are crimes under the Criminal Code (see criminal harassment).

- **Criminal harassment/stalking** – an obsessive behaviour directed toward another individual that involves the persistent, malicious, unwanted surveillance and invasion of privacy that is a constant threat to an individual's personal security.

- **Verbal abuse** – constant criticism, humiliation, name-calling and "put-downs." It includes unjust blaming and false accusations about loyalties or sexual actions.

- **Sexual abuse** – any form of non-consensual or forced sexual activity or touching. It also includes coercing or forcing a family member to engage in pornography and/or prostitution. All forms of sexual violence are crimes under the Criminal Code. Sexual abuse can also include being infected with HIV, or other sexually transmitted diseases, because a partner refuses to use a condom or does not tell the other person about the possibility of infection.

- **Financial abuse** – denying the victim access to the family's or individual's money, permitting no say in family expenditures, restricting employment opportunities, seizure of pay cheques and/or providing no money for the victim's personal use.

- **Spiritual abuse** – mocking or attacking the victim's spiritual beliefs and/or not allowing the victim to attend the church, synagogue or temple of choice. In some cases, children are raised in a different faith or tradition, against the will of the abused partner.

Spouse Abuse/Abuse by Intimate Partners

Spouse abuse/abuse by an intimate partner is an attempt to control the behaviour of a spouse, common-law partner or other intimate partner. It is a misuse of power that uses the bonds of intimacy, trust and dependency to make the other person unequal, powerless and unsafe.

Abuse of Older Adults

Abuse of older adults, which includes elder abuse or senior abuse, is the mistreatment of older people by family members who are in a position of trust, power or responsibility for their care.

Child Maltreatment/Abuse

Child maltreatment is the mistreatment of a child or a disregard for the developmental needs of a child by a parent, guardian or caregiver resulting in injury, emotional/psychological harm or the potential for such harm. It includes all forms of child abuse and neglect and would encompass the harm that comes to children from exposure to family violence.

Parent Abuse

Parent abuse is any act of a child that is intended to cause physical, psychological or financial damage to gain power and control over a parent.

Bullying

Bullying is a conscious, willful, deliberate and repeated hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm, and/or a threat of aggression. When bullying escalates unabated, it may lead to a feeling of terror on the part of the individual being bullied. Bullying may include, but is not limited to: physical intimidation or assault; extortion; oral or written threats; teasing; putdowns; name calling; threatening looks, gestures or actions; cruel rumours; false accusations; and social isolation.

APPENDIX B – CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Regional Workshops

Social Change
What can be done to instill in Albertans that family violence and bullying are everyone's responsibility?

Services and Supports
What services and supports could/should be available to a person in need, to deal with family violence and bullying?

Co-operation and Collaboration
How can we (communities, agencies and governments) work together in a more co-operative and collaborative manner to provide services and supports to those impacted by family violence and bullying?

Accountability
How can we (individuals, families, communities, agencies and governments) better recognize and meet the needs of those impacted by family violence and bullying?

Focus Groups

Perceptions and Causes of Family Violence
- Why do you think violence happens in families?

Social Change
- Were there attitudes, beliefs and/or behaviours from family, friends or others from your community that you found helpful during difficult times?
- In the same way, were there attitudes, beliefs and/or behaviours that made your situation harder?
- If you did encounter problems with attitudes, beliefs and/or behaviours, what do you think could be done to improve this situation?

Services and Supports
- In your experience, what programs, services or other kind of assistance worked well when you needed help?

Accountability
- Did you have any problems getting the help you needed? If so, what were they?
- If you did have problems, what would you suggest could be done to improve the situation?
- Do you have any other suggestions to make to government, community agencies or others you know in the community?

Public Questionnaire

Changing Beliefs and Attitudes
What actions can we take in Alberta to promote healthy relationships and prevent family violence and bullying?

Community-Based Services and Supports
What services and supports are needed by people who are directly affected by family violence or bullying in your community?

Working Together
How can we all work together to better prevent and respond to the needs of those directly impacted by family violence and bullying?

Setting Priorities
What specific changes would you expect to see in the next three to five years to know that we are making progress in reducing family violence and bullying in Alberta?